



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/portion-portion-improving-food-security-through-efficient-land-use>

Portion by Portion -- Improving Food Security Through Efficient Land Use



USAID/Kenya

Value Farms beneficiaries and employees prepare to sell tomatoes grown from their consolidated land.

Kenyan farm land, especially in western Kenya, is traditionally passed on to the next generation. Unfortunately, as farm land is divided among an ever-greater number of heirs, the plots grow increasingly smaller. Often, they become so tiny that owners don't consider them worth farming, and less and less land is used to grow food despite being near a permanent water source.

"Coming from a western part of Kenya myself, I was always saddened that land was unutilized because farmers felt the plot wasn't big enough to cultivate," says Peter Waga, founder and executive director of Value Farms. "Malnutrition, lack of food security, and stagnant economic growth is a norm in the region."

To help alleviate this problem, Peter developed the idea of a "Value Farm" in 2014, working with landowners to consolidate and lease their holdings for commercial agriculture. The combined land is then leased as a single block for the cultivation of high-value crops by participating farmers, who benefit from access to secure employment by providing labor with a guaranteed monthly income, and they earn profits as shares based on their land parcel size. This financial stability allows farmers to buy other food products to ensure a balanced diet for their families, send their children to school, and afford to pay for basic medical care. A section of the land is set aside specifically for the farmers, where they plant a variety of vegetables as part of Value Farm's feeding program. To ensure each farmer's family gets a fair share of crops, specific harvest days are assigned to different households once a week and farmers are allowed to harvest enough for their families.

The initial phase of the project consolidated 260 acres, with an additional 400 acres during the second phase, for a current total of 660 acres. Value Farms produces horticultural and grain legumes on the farms, as well as other high-value crops like beetroot, butternut squash, chili peppers, cucumber, green maize, kale, onions, spinach, tomatoes, and watermelon. By later this year, Value Farms expects to have reached its target of getting 1,200 acres of combined land under irrigation. This is expected to further boost crop production and income generation for local farmers, thereby increasing food and nutrition

security. Value Farm's management uses a dual approach when deciding what to plant on a given farm, retaining both traditional crops that have nutritional values, as well as planting crops that are in high demand. This approach ensures a diversified portfolio that will be financially sustainable.

"We could not afford to buy supplemental food imports from outside the region, and our children were always missing school because of malnutrition related diseases," a Value Farms beneficiary said recently. "Things are different now - we're able to grow our own food and also have enough to sell, giving us the opportunity to generate more income. I can rest easier knowing that my family and I have access to a balanced diet."

As a community organization, Value Farms is supported in part through the Feed the Future Kenya Innovation Engine, a program that invests in new ideas with the scalable potential to improve the productivity and incomes of smallholder farmers. Value Farms was among the innovations nominated to receive Feed the Future funding, and going forward, the organization will focus on stemming post-harvest losses and sustaining market supply. Today, Value Farms continues to improve food security for the nearly 4,000 households living in the Lake Sare region.